1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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nothing to show that they had long been in the Saskatchewan region. All that is certain of their previous past is their closer relationship to the Arapaho than to any other tribe; and the origin of the Arapaho is equally obscure, except that it is certain that, if they came from the north and east, it was a long time ago. Of the Gros Ventre it can only be said that, while related to the Arapaho and regarded by them as almost politically a part of themselves, they were far separated from them when first known, with them for a short time later, and again separated, and in contact and alliance with another much more distantly related Algonkin branch. Their habitat in a hundred years has been successively near the Saskatchewan, the Platte, and the Missouri. There is nothing to show that such variability of affiliation and location within the culture region of the Plains has not been characteristic of their previous history.

The Gros Ventre call the tribes near them by the following names: Arapaho, hinan'ăn (in Arapaho, hinanaei-na"); Cheyenne, itisŏn, "scars" (itisŏ", "a scar;" Arapaho name of the Cheyenne, hitaciina"); Cree, na"tsa", "rabbits;" Ojibwa, djinhuna"tsa", "Lower Cree;" the three Blackfoot tribes, waotä"nixtäats, "black-feet" (a Blackfoot, waotä"nixtänin, "black-foot-man;" a Piegan, tsä"t'; the Bloods, ka"winähaä"); Assiniboine, na"djinethin; Sioux,. na"wina"djinei, "Below-Assiniboine" (in Arapaho, na"tinei, "a Sioux"); Crow, hounen, "crow-men;" Minitari, wuxnokayan, "—lodges;" Shoshone, sosonyänin, "snake-men;" Bannock, waotä"nixiinin, "black-men" (in Arapaho the Ute are called wrotänähiçi, "black"); Flathead Salish, kaakaäänin, "flathead-man;" Nezperé, taniibats, "pierced-nose" (Arapaho taniibaaçi is the Caddo). Two tribes to the southwest or perhaps west, which have not been identified, are the wasöi"hiiyeihits, "grass-dwellers," who live in houses of grass or brush; and the na"wuxa-anfibiina"ts, "fish-eaters."

The Gros Ventre were divided into groups similar to those of the Blackfeet and Sioux. The names of these bands were nicknames, and in no way totemic. As there was prohibition of marriage within the band, the name "clan" is, however, applicable to them. Descent was paternal and a man belonged to his father's band; but the prohibition of marriage extended also to his mother's clan, all the members of both the father's and mother's clan being considered relatives. Each band seems to have had a recognized head or chief. During the winter the tribe broke into smaller groups, consisting of one or perhaps more clans, which followed the buffalo, and camped chiefly in the timber. There corrals were made for the horses at night to prevent their being stolen by war-parties. When summer came, the clans joined and camped together in the large camp-circle. In this, the opening of which was toward the east, the different bands had definite

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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CHAPTER III

NECESSITIES OF LIFE

The dominant technique by which the Gros Ventres met their needs was that of hunting, especially of the buffalo. The yearly round of productive activities was geared to the quest of that animal, with hunting of other animals, collecting, and the processing of raw materials subordinated thereto.

The Seasonal Round

The Gros Ventres state that buffalo were plentiful in their territory, at least in the area claimed from the 1830's on. This is borne out by studies of the habits and migrations of the buffalo in the northern plains.[1] In the exploitation of this abundant resource there were two regular peaks of intensive hunting—a concerted effort on the part of the tribe as a whole—in the spring and in the fall. During the summer the amount of hunting was fairly consistent, being stepped up occasionally in view of any Sacred Dances which might have been vowed. During the dead of winter the hunting of buffalo was said to have been only sporadic and not on so large a scale.

Some time in April the whole tribe foregathered to organize the first spring hunt which lasted about a month. This coincided with the northward migration of the buffalo which had wintered on the Montana ranges. The smaller herds formed in great masses as they sought their summer pastures on the plains of the Saskatchewan, where they again scattered into smaller herds. During this time the whole Gros Ventre tribe camped together and the hunters worked out from the camp as often as necessary, there being plenty of game within easy distance as the millions of buffalo passed a given spot. Apparently after this big hunt was over, the spring Pipe Rite was held and then everyone was free to move where he pleased. Usually the main body of the tribe stayed fairly

[1] Hornaday, pp. 388–89, 425.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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well together during the ensuing summer months, a band or two moving off by themselves to rejoin the tribe in time to prepare for whatever Sacred Dances might have been scheduled, and parties of 10, 20, 30 or more men would go off to raid the enemy. Precautions had to be taken, too, against the ever-present danger of being raided by the enemy, especially by smaller groups separated from the main tribe as they went further and further from the center of their territory in quest of game.[8]

The hides of buffalo killed during the spring and summer were used to make parfleshes, moccasin soles, lodge covers, ropes and the like. Fresh meat was usually plentiful although it was necessary to move six or eight times a summer to keep up with the buffalo, some smaller herds of which apparently remained in Montana in spite of the migration of the vast majority to the north. Meantime as the various berries, wild fruits and wild roots ripened, collecting was done whenever opportunity offered, neither tribal nor band movements being determined, so far as we are aware, by that objective, but depending almost entirely on the whereabouts of the buffalo. During August and September, the rutting season, the buffalo joined in great milling masses leaving bare the surrounding range for many miles. The buffalo then separated into smaller herds again and by October, when the Gros Ventres started their concerted fall hunt, the buffalo were in prime condition, their coats sleek and fine.

The best time for robe hunting was approximately from October 15 to November 15, but the hunt continued until all had sufficient meat dried and stored to see them through the winter. It was said that as many robes as possible were dressed with the fur on, and

[8] In this connection it is interesting to note that the old Cree, quoted by Thompson, pp. 329–30, after describing a drawn battle between the Snake and Piegan about 1730 concludes: ". . . night put an end to the battle without a scalp being taken on either side, and in those days such was the result, unless one party was more numerous than the other. The great mischief of war then, was as now [1786], by attacking and destroying small camps of 10–30 tents which are obliged to separate for hunting." Such was evidently still the case in the middle of the 19th century. Denig writes in 1854, pp. 548–50, that when the contending parties are nearly equal, little damage is done. The worst damage occurs, however, when 200 to 400 warriors surprise a camp of 20 to 30 lodges.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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meat was dried " in wholesale quantities." This was the time of year when lodge covers and furnishings were replaced where necessary, new lodge poles cut, paint gathered from the mountains, and everything was done to prepare for winter quarters. 221 224

The tribe then split into groups of several bands each to seek places along watercourses where they would be protected as much as possible from the rigors of the weather as well as from depredations by their enemies. Trapping of fur-bearing animals and hunting of deer, elk and antelope by individual methods, such as stalking with the gun as weapon, were done during this season, with only an occasional buffalo being killed. The Gros Ventres placed the greatest emphasis on ability to hunt and recognized their limitations in trapping as compared with the Cree. It was considered most important for a man to be a good shot, whether with bow and arrow or gun. Nevertheless some fur-bearing animals were trapped. For beaver they usually used the steel trap or, when that was not available, they broke the dam and grabbed the beaver. Often they would smoke out an animal like the kit-fox, for example, and then shoot it. They knew a deadfall [3] for the fox and wolf, whose pelts they never used themselves but traded with the whites, and there was one trapping song which was sung to give luck in that pursuit.[4] But all in all hunting of the buffalo and to a lesser extent of the elk, deer and antelope, was a major occupation, while other animals were sought for only sporadically.

Buffalo Hunting and the Horse

The general procedure in hunting buffalo was about as follows. First, scouts, sent out to locate the herd, reported its whereabouts. Then the group of hunters, varying in size according to whether the whole tribe or only a band or two were camped together, would depart from camp in order to reach the herd by dawn. The swift buffalo horses to be used in the actual chase were led unburdened so as to keep them fresh. When the herd was spotted, the hunters mounted their swiftest horses and, at a given signal, all dashed into the herd at once, each man then killing as many as he could 224

[3] Kroeber, 1908, p. 149, describes the deadfall, and mentions also snaring and other methods of hunting birds.

[4] The song was recorded as Nos. 89, 90, 91.

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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take you to a camp of Gros Ventres.' 'Who are they?' she asked, 'What is their name?' The woman told her: 'A little short man called Warrior Man,' who was a brother of the returned woman through marriage.

"So the woman took the returned Gros Ventre woman to this camp and said: 'I have brought you a Gros Ventre woman. Come and see who it is.' As soon as they saw who it was, they were glad and took her and kissed her and gave her everything good.

"One evening a few days later Warrior Man and his wife got ready and before sunup started off for the big Gros Ventre camp. He walked while Crow Bull's wife rode horseback. It was springtime with wet snow still on the ground. The big camp was at Big Sandy, on the north side of Milk River at the place where the trees stop. They arrived there early in the morning and did not know where to go. I, Coming Daylight, saw the man and the two women approaching and went out to see who they were. The man asked: 'Where is Crow Bull's lodge?' I then saw them go to Crow Bull's lodge. All at his lodge were glad to see the returned captive and kissed her.

"Later when the ground got dry, the whole tribe moved to their usual place here at what is now Hays. Crow Bull made good his vow to take the Flat Pipe if his wife got back safe to him, and I witnessed the transfer, by the keeper of the time, Lame Bull. The rite took place just about a half mile north of where St. Paul's Mission now is."

Crow Bull kept the Pipe a long time, until his death in 1887, upon which it fell to his widow, an Assiniboine woman named Coming Day. This woman neglected the Pipe. Coming Daylight told her: "Now, this Pipe is just like your father. Why is he always left alone? He was never left alone before. Now I have a mare and this Pipe has a saddle. Put the Pipe on the saddle and take it to White Bird. He will take care of it." So they went to White Bird and talked to him first. He agreed to take it over without rite or vow. On the request of a young man, Bird Sits High, the Pipe was transferred to him. This young man died soon after and his father, Otter Robe, took it upon himself to harbor the Pipe. When Otter Robe died, sometime prior to 1908,

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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dried and seasoned, then pulverized, and used in a liquid. It was also used mixed with other things. 278

The Pipe keepers, and co-keepers, ex-keepers and ex-co-keepers, were immune and could handle it. But if others touched the plant or powder they would be seized at once with fits which only an actual or retired keeper or co-keeper could cure by working on him and blowing some of the powder on him. Some Gros Ventres, however, such as old Deafie, did not believe that wild parsley caused fits, but many cases are reported. One man, for instance, in recent times carried some in his hands to a dance, and during the dance got a fit and it took one of the ex-co-keepers to bring him out of it. Another man used wild parsley as a medicine in doctoring. Each participant in the Crazy Lodge used it. But originally its use was confined to Pipe keepers and co-keepers (see p. 52).

If one were scratched with an arrow that had been dipped in wild parsley infusion he would suffer spasms, fits and acute agony and would not live till morning. Such a poisoned arrow was tied by each Crazy Lodge dancer to his bow, apparently as a silent threat to enforce obedience and respect by the people during the lodge rites, but was thrown away after the dance was over.* These poisoned arrows were not used at any other time than the Crazy Lodge; never for instance, in Gros Ventre wars or raids on enemies. 411 278

Seasonal Rites

The three annual seasonal rites were in the olden days the major ceremonial events in Gros Ventre life according to The Boy, Thick and older informants. No vow was necessary to hold them. They were never omitted. They had to be performed. The seasonal rites have long since been given up. They were last carried out sometime in the late 1860's or early 1870's, while The Boy's father, Lame Bull, was keeper. 796* 178

The three seasonal rites were held in the spring, fall and winter respectively. About April the various Gros Ventre bands, which 796* 221● 361

*Cf. Kroeber, 1908, pp. 207-08 regarding poisoned arrow.

3; Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
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*796 ●221 361 had been scattered during the winter, would foregather at a designated place for the spring buffalo hunt, and when the trees were in leaf and the grass up and everything growing and in blossom and a certain kind of sage about 10 inches high, long enough to pluck, the spring rite was held. During the summer months the bands kept more or less together, largely engaged in hunting the buffalo and holding the Sacred Lodges. Around October occurred the larger fall hunt to get in supplies of meat, skin, fur, sinew and so forth for the winter, and, before the bands scattered, the fall rite took place. After the fall rite, the bands scattered for the winter months. The winter rite was performed about the middle of the winter season and was participated in only by the members of the band or bands which had elected to stay the winter with the Pipe and its keeper.

*796 The three rites were fundamentally the same, with some differences to be noted, but had each its own purpose. All three were dominantly theistic in the sense of being directed chiefly toward the Supreme Being. Spring time, when all nature was coming again to life, was in general Gros Ventre religious belief, the most propitious time for prayer. The spring Pipe rite was primarily a rite of hope and petition, a prayer that all things would grow well, that there would be plenty of game and of plant food, that the people would have abundance of all things they needed for living well, that they would be successful in all their worthwhile undertakings such as the hunt, that there would be no sickness, and that all would live happily. The fall rite, held after the winter supply had been killed and dried and berries had been gathered, new lodge coverings made, and perhaps new lodge poles, new bedding, clothes cleaned, etc., was primarily a rite of gladness and thanksgiving. To "make a sort of report" to the Supreme Being that they were still living, that their spring prayers to him had been answered in the way they had asked, and to give thanks to him for these good things which ultimately had come from him. The purpose of [801] the winter rite was less clear cut. For one thing, the rite was required to round out the cycle of three, the Pipe number. Thanksgiving was one purpose, thanksgiving "and a sort of singing of praises," "a sort of adoration," because the people were at leisure, without hardship, sickness or anxiety, glad to be still alive in the